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FILIPINO VIEWS OF AMERICAN RULE.

BY DR. T. H. PARDO DE TAVERA, BENITO LEGARDA AND JOSE
RUIZ DE LUZURIAGA, THE NATIVE MEMBERS OF THE
UNITED STATES PHILIPPINE COMMISSION.

A frank expression regarding the influence of American rule in the Philippine Islands has been obtained for the NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW from the three eminent Filipinos who have been acting since September 1st, under the appointment of the President of the United States, as members of the United States Philippine Commission. Each of these gentlemen was asked by the representative of the REVIEW at Manila to give written answers to four questions regarding the effects of American control. Their answers show that many good results have followed American government in the Philippines, but they are entirely frank in their references to the ravages of the insurrection and the many things which remain to be done before the Islands will enter upon a career of enduring prosperity.

The four questions were:

"Has the presence of the United States in the Philippine Islands resulted in the improvement of the political and economic conditions as compared with those existing under Spanish rule?

"What good results have followed the presence of the United States in the Islands?

"What ought the United States to do in the Islands to promote the commercial progress of the people of the Philippines?

"What form of government ought to be established in the Islands by the Congress of the United States?"

I.

THE principal benefit resulting from American sovereignty in the Philippine Islands has been the liberation of the Filipinos from the sad and hated political intervention of the Friars. The system employed by Spain to assure her domination in the country by means of the religious orders is well known. Americans are not able to understand what the Friar really is, because they regard him purely from the religious point of view, and in the Philippines the religious side in the Friar is one of the very least importance. To understand his rôle in these Islands, it is

necessary to recall the part which he played in Spain in the time of that terrible King, Philip II., when the Inquisition and the intolerance of the monks controlled with iron hand all the social, economic and political machinery of the Spanish state. The responsibility for all the acts of injustice and the errors committed by Spain in the Philippines have been attributed to the Friar; and although he was only the tool of the government the Filipino people consider him primarily accountable for all their misfortunes.

The separation of the church and state is not yet understood here in all its breadth and meaning, but it responds to a necessity, and is therefore received as an invaluable benefit by the people. Thanks to it, the Friar does not intervene as he used to do in municipal affairs nor in those of the provinces; and he can no longer threaten the people with his omnipotence, because the government neither wishes nor has a right to appeal to him under any pretext or excuse.

The centralizing policy of Spain was evil for us. Men who were ignorant of our necessities, our customs, and our situation, and who had no reason to occupy themselves with such details, legislated for our country in Madrid. It is known that it was said that the "Philippines were for Spain and for Spain alone." The convenience of the mother country was always sought, and by the side of that no attention was paid to the necessities of the colonies. Now, although the Filipinos do not legislate in their own country, we have succeeded in having legislation carried on among ourselves. The legislators hear our voice, know the country, and there has never been a return to the unjust and cruel theory by which we were formerly governed: "The Philippines are for the sovereign nation and for the sovereign nation alone." On the contrary, the promises of the lamented President, Mr. McKinley, are being fulfilled—that America comes to the Philippines to aid them, to sustain them and to give to them the principles of liberty and free government which rule the United States and make it great.

Municipal organization is another of the great benefits which we all recognize. The complete autonomy which the municipalities now have could not be—I do not say "proposed"—but not even conceived of or hinted at under the former régime.

The rôle of the present Civil Governor cannot be compared

with the one which the former Governor General, surrounded with attributes and vested with arbitrary powers, exercised here. Then the Governor interfered in everything; he was the legislative, executive and judicial power at one and the same time, intervening even in affairs of the most personal character. The system of absolutely separating the judicial, legislative and executive powers is so new to the Filipinos that at each step we pause with doubts and consultations, not only on the part of the people at large, but even on the part of those Filipinos who now occupy positions in the executive department. It is also novel in the extreme to think of the supreme executive power of the archipelago having a civil character; because, accustomed as we are to the traditional rule of military power, aided and reinforced by an organized priesthood, it is not easy now to understand how civil power holds sway, with the power of the priesthood completely annulled and the military power converted into a part of the simple administrative machinery of the state.

The law of *habeas corpus*, the power to assemble, the freedom of speech and of the press, the abrogation of obligatory military service and of the execrable system which but recently lent itself to so many outrageous abuses, and the abolition of banishment, imprisonment and military executions on account of political beliefs, are real benefits which American sovereignty has brought about in the Philippines.

The economic situation of the Philippines was lamentable. I had some notion of it, but when I traversed a great part of the archipelago, accompanying the Commission on its trip to organize provincial governments, I had the sad opportunity of convincing myself of the lamentable economic state of the Islands. There are no ports; no rivers with clean entrances and channels available for commerce; there are no wharves; the roads are deficient, and there are only six or eight lighthouses in the Islands. The public buildings are few and bad; I do not refer to those which were destroyed in the war, for even if these still existed they would not supply the deficiency. The only existing hospital was that of San Juan de Dios de Manila, sustained by public charity. Hardly any schools were to be found, and the most frequent public edifices met with were the prisons, over whose entrances by a lamentably bad interpretation of Christian charity had been inscribed the words: "He hates the crime and sympathizes with

the criminal." Such a sentence appears to have been inscribed for making martyrs of those who under the weight of an odious crime suffered—victims of fatality—human punishment. The best public buildings which are found on all sides are those dedicated to religious purposes, though many, to be sure, are burned and destroyed.

The government has to create everything. The city of Manila has been the first to reap the benefits of the new government, as it had from the very first moment of American occupation an organized sanitary department which was of prime necessity. As yet there has not been time to do more, because everything has to be literally created and formed anew; but we already have two magnificent iron markets, the streets are well ordered, contracts for the harbor works of Manila have been made, a bridge has been constructed in the Plaza de Santa Cruz, and very shortly they will commence to dredge the river Pasig, which is not available for ships drawing more than three feet of water. In the provinces, roads are being built and wooden bridges are being constructed to replace those of cane built about three centuries ago, and a land tax has been established; in brief, there has been organized an economic life whose skeleton, whose foundation, did not formerly exist here.

A strict accounting system in the administration has resulted in the taxes producing to-day double what they did in the best epoch of the former administration without, as yet, any increase having been made in the rate of taxation. The same thing has happened in the customs service, and the Insular Treasury contains a surplus of ten million pesos, an unprecedented condition in this country.

Such are the good results which have followed the presence here of the United States; but, as a result of the war, agriculture has been wiped out and the public wealth has diminished to such an extent that movable and immovable property has been reduced to ashes. Compensation is to be found in the fact that the Filipinos are convinced that the era of justice has begun. There is no longer a government of privileged characters, nor is the law now obeyed by the poor alone. Bribery, too, has been made the cause for sending more than one person to prison.

This does not mean that all the Americans who have come here have paid heed to justice and practiced the virtues which

their nation honors, but the public authorities have laid a heavy hand on those whose misconduct has contributed to a great extent to the prolongation of the war.

An epidemic among the cattle has destroyed a great number of carabaos, and they are animals for which no substitute can be found in the labors of our fields; and since our commerce depends essentially on the agricultural products of our soil, agricultural losses have been enormously increased thereby.

It is also to be noted with satisfaction that the government has paid punctually for those works which it has undertaken, and it is no longer the case that wages are withheld, on any or no pretext, from those who have been legally employed for the benefit of the government.

Commerce and agriculture will be greatly stimulated by the creation of trust companies and mortgage loan companies, with branches in the principal capitals of the Provinces. The construction of roads, the deepening of the river channels, the building of wharves and harbors, and the creation of means of communication—of which there are none to-day—will give a powerful impulse to the country, and the result thereof will soon be seen. The expense of public administration makes the creation of taxes unavoidable; but it would seem to be a mistake to hasten the imposition of direct taxes which will cause the Filipinos to sell, of necessity, their property holdings to persons or societies with sufficient means to be able to exploit them, just at this time. Doubtless the public wealth would not lose by such a change of ownership, but individuals would suffer. The rich persons or societies who should acquire the holdings would erect their prosperity upon the ruin of the former owners.

It would be very beneficial if Filipino products could enter free of duty into the United States, which country would thus become the great market for our exports.

We supporters of the Federal Party aspire to see the Filipinos constitute themselves some day into a State like those which form the Union. Until we are in a condition to obtain this final desire, we hope that, gradually and in accordance with the capacity and situation of our people, the government of the Philippines may go on acquiring a state of autonomy more and more nearly complete, approaching the definite form of its final development. If we had not had so prolonged a war, there is no doubt that it would

have been necessary to organize a government like that which has been given to Porto Rico and to Hawaii. We understand that the war has created for us a different situation, and although we desire to-day to have the benefits of self-government established in these Islands, I believe that the condition in which we find ourselves placed would not justify it.

For the present, it seems to me that Congress should approve the provisional form of government established here, maintaining it during one, two, or perhaps three years in such a way that, when partisan feelings have been calmed, when a certain lack of confidence between Americans and Filipinos has disappeared, the time will have arrived for giving us a territorial government.

To-day the Filipinos desire, as the most important measure of the American government, that there be conceded to us a chamber of representatives of the people, chosen by election. Nothing could be more just; but is it, indeed, opportune? We cannot and do not forget that the Isle of Samar, that of Cebu, that of Bohol, Batangas and other provinces, although they do not constitute, to be sure, a great part of our territory, are to-day in open rebellion against the United States. Those provinces would not be able to send representatives, if it were attempted now to establish a Congress by popular vote. Furthermore, in those places which are pacified, I do not know to what extent it would be practicable to hold an election, in view of the circumstances in regard to political and partisan education which exist to-day. It would be sad, indeed, if a chamber formulated at this time by popular election should prove a fiasco.

I fear greatly that such a chamber would prove unavailing at this time, and that the government would find itself compelled to suppress it—an act which would not only wound the *amour propre* of the Filipinos, but might retard the time for establishing a real territorial government without the restrictions which present conditions would impose.

I believe that to-day full satisfaction would be given to the just desires of the Filipinos, if Congress, upon approving the form of government which we actually have, should decide that our Archipelago should send to Washington, in the character of representatives, fully informed as to the needs of the Filipinos, two delegates chosen by vote. This could be accomplished by each province selecting a commissioner, and these commissioners

once assembled would choose the delegates to represent them at Washington.

It is certain that my opinion will not to-day receive the approval of the majority; but I will not forget that, though the policy I advocated three years ago was then generally considered absurd, it is as generally accepted to-day as just, rational and patriotic.

T. H. PARDO DE TAVERA.

II.

The political conditions of the Archipelago, notwithstanding that we are now in a period of transition, have changed considerably for the better, when compared with the tyrannical colonial system of Spain. The autonomy now enjoyed by the *pueblos* organized under the provisions of the Municipal Code, promulgated by the United States Philippine Commission, could not be more liberal; never have the Filipinos enjoyed such equal rights, neither under Spanish rule nor during the time of the short-lived Malolos government. The right of suffrage as exercised to-day is an entirely new thing to the Filipinos. So also is the exercise of all of the individual rights which they enjoy under the American flag, and it is only those who obstinately refuse to see what is taking place under their very eyes, those incorrigible obstructionists who oppose all civilization and progress and systematically find fault with every measure that the American government has purposed to carry out in these Islands, who will deny the rapid advance that has been achieved here in so short a time—not by restricting liberty, but by extending it; not by limiting public instruction nor by supporting religious fanaticism, but by fostering everywhere public education, purifying and strengthening religious convictions, and requiring respect towards all forms of worship.

All of the above mentioned advantages, coupled with the added value which necessarily pertains to all rights guaranteed by a strong and stable government, we in this Archipelago have enjoyed since the day that it pleased Providence to plant the American flag on our soil. Even though many Filipinos cannot for the present appreciate these advantages for the reason that the ravages of the war, now happily drawing to a close, and which was cruel and bloody in some of the districts of the Archipelago, are still too obvious, it is hoped that in time these evils will be

forgotten and they will then be convinced of the sincerity of the American government.

The customs tariff recently promulgated completely satisfies for the present the aspirations of Philippine industry and commerce. Great benefits would accrue from the establishment of mortgage loan banks, which would facilitate the development of the great sources of wealth which are to-day completely at the mercy of usury; but it would be well to remember that in order to accomplish this successfully, it will be necessary so to modify the existing laws as to guarantee property titles, so that they would become unquestionable before the law. Equal benefits would result from the building of good roads and railways, which would furnish transportation for the people and for the products of this rich soil and its industries. They would increase production and open up immense fields and rich lands, which are to-day untilled on account of the lack of means of transportation. The same thing may be said of the regulation of the sale and the development of public lands, which would encourage a large immigration of American laborers and farmers, who would teach the Filipinos the inadequacy of their primitive system of agriculture. This would indeed be a step in the right direction for the Archipelago. Other benefits would be gained by the establishment of experimental agricultural stations similar to those in the United States.

The change proposed by the government in the monetary system and the adoption of the gold standard, now universally established in the commercial centers of the world, as well as the issue of a special coinage for this Archipelago, at a fixed ratio to that of the United States, would place commerce on a safer basis. The regulation of the granting of concessions for the working of the mines of all kinds with which this country is blessed, would give us an opportunity of freeing ourselves from the large importations of coal and other minerals which to-day makes us tributary to other countries.

Although there are powerful reasons for believing that a more autonomous government would be very beneficial to the moral and material reconstruction of this Archipelago, they are no less weighty than those held by people who are of the opinion that the *status quo* of the existing provisional government ought to prevail for the period of two years. This time is considered indispensa-

ble to allow the Filipinos to become conversant with their individual rights and their use, and to become familiar with the right of suffrage, which, as has been said before, is an entirely new thing to them. The most powerful argument to be found in favor of the latter view is based on the results of the municipal elections in some provinces, where the voters, instead of considering the common good, have allowed themselves to be influenced by the dominant *casiquism* or by the party passions and puerile reactionism which not long ago incited the war. There is no doubt that the Filipino people must purge themselves of these vices inherited from their former rulers and which are today deeply rooted in them, before they can fully enter upon the exercise of their rights. When this has been brought about, it will be well to remember that sudden changes are seldom beneficial and that a gradual development is always more advantageous.

The hope of the Filipino people would be to have a Legislative Chamber of Representatives who were elected from each province, though such elections should be limited and restricted, in that the electors would have to combine the qualifications of fitness and capability as well as the elected; and these conditions should be made also to apply to the powers of the Chamber, to the extent that its acts might be set aside whenever the executive government thought that measure necessary for the common good.

It would also be well to allow a delegation, composed of several persons elected from within the Chamber, to represent it in an informative character in Congress at Washington, so that the Filipinos might have an opportunity of learning and later exercising political functions; but this, I believe, will only be possible when all of the provinces are able to be represented in the Chamber. In short, I believe all of this will be possible only when the hostility which still exists against the constituted power shall have ceased.

BENITO LEGARDA.

III.

Taking up the subjects in the order placed in the interrogatory, I begin by stating that the presence of United States government in these Islands has undoubtedly produced immense changes for the better in the political conditions of the Filipino people. Indeed, it could not be otherwise, as the Filipinos have rid themselves from the theocratic yoke and placed themselves

under the eminently liberal administration of the United States, by which they have been enabled to secure those liberties and rights which they could never have attained under the Spanish sovereignty.

With regard to the economical situation, it can at once be affirmed that so far as Manila and other cities of the Archipelago are concerned, where large numbers of Americans are gathered, belonging to the army and the Civil Government, the situation has improved to a remarkable extent; but it must not be inferred from this fact that the country, taken as a whole, is prosperous. It is true that imports to Manila have considerably increased, and that for this reason stores of all kinds, from those handling staple articles to those dealing in luxuries, have multiplied. It is also true that city real estate and rentals have greatly increased in value. Judging from the business done in Manila, it might appear that the whole country was relatively as well off, the prosperous state of the capital being but a faithful reflection of the general welfare of the Archipelago. But it must be borne in mind, on the other hand, that agriculture has suffered a mortal blow in all of those provinces where the war was actively carried on, and that little by little production has been falling off every year until to-day it is at its minimum—not only because of the war, but also on account of the ravages of the locusts and the rinderpest, which have practically paralyzed it. The plantations, farms and cultivated lands do not now produce enough for local consumption; indeed, they fall far short of the requirements of the inhabitants. This anomalous situation has now resulted in an adverse trade balance so ruinous to the Filipinos that they have been compelled to pay with their savings for the value of imported merchandise consumed for the past three years. They have had no domestic products to export, excepting small quantities of abaca and copra, the value of which has not been sufficient to counterbalance their losses.

As a result of the authority of the United States in these Islands, we have to acknowledge the great benefits that peace and all its wholesome and profitable conditions have brought to the provinces as well as to the *pueblos* under civil rule, where, aside from the advantages of the municipal autonomy and the provincial régime, the administration of justice is speedy and upright. Moreover, schools have been so organized that the Americaniza-

tion of this country will be an accomplished fact within a few years if all elements join, as it is to be hoped they will, for the purpose of accomplishing this meritorious work in favor of the culture and welfare of these peoples.

In order to attain commercial progress in these Islands, which to my mind is most essential in these critical times, it is necessary to place our commerce under the strongest protection, so that it may be raised from the state of prostration which now prevails, after suffering the effects of a titanic struggle against the evils of war and the ravages of the locusts and the rinderpest. The war has deprived it of laborers; the locusts have annually destroyed the plantations; and, lastly, the rinderpest has carried off the caraboas necessary for the cultivation of the land. The best remedy, then, which at present can be applied, is the establishment of mortgage loan banks in those provinces where agriculture is best developed. As an experiment, and one which I am sure would be crowned with success, I would suggest the establishment of a bank of that kind at Bacolod, capital of the province of Occidental Negros, which is the most productive sugar-growing district in the Archipelago, but which has unfortunately lost all of its caraboas through the rinderpest. This province has at present enough ground planted in cane to yield a crop of one and a half million picos of sugar for the next harvest (one pico is equal to $137\frac{1}{2}$ pounds). The establishment of mortgage loan banks would not be so difficult if the Insular Government would lend its assistance to the realization of this useful and vital requirement.

As for the rest, agriculture being the principal source of all wealth, it is evident that, if by the establishment of mortgage banks relief is granted to the agriculturists who to-day find themselves in a state of prostration, the increase in the products of the soil which this will bring about will in itself be sufficient to send commerce along the road of progress—especially so if at the same time adequate means of transportation are obtained, along with a sensible system of taxation which shall in no way be burdensome to the taxpayer.

In my opinion, it is very difficult to answer at present the question with respect to the system of government that Congress ought to provide for us. However, taking into account the aspirations of the majority of men who are more or less interested in

the political future of this country, my answer can be condensed as follows: That it might perhaps be well to establish here a form of government similar to that of Hawaii or Porto Rico. Since the conditions here, however, are somewhat different to those which prevailed in those islands when their governments were established by the United States, it is clear that our case must have a different solution. Aside from the agitation which still influences the minds of most of the people, it is well to remember that the province of Batangas and the Islands of Samar, Mindoro, Cebú and Bohol are yet in open warfare against the government of the United States.

So long as this abnormal condition exists, it does not appear to me that it would be prudent and politic to introduce any change in the established government of these Islands. Only when hostilities shall have completely ceased, when the popular mind is less perturbed, ought there to be thought of forming a popular Chamber of Representatives, elected by suffrage under an election law which, by its wise restrictions, shall offer a safe guarantee that such representatives shall be wisely chosen. With this Chamber of Representatives the Civil Commission as at present organized would co-operate, constituting a Council of Government to the Executive Power of the Governor and the secretaries of the departments, the latter having the powers of a Senate. Such a form of government, I believe, would satisfy the Filipino people until such time as they were capable of forming, as a Territory, a part of the Great Republic of the United States.

JOSÉ RUIZ DE LUZURIAGA.